

PLATO'S THOUGHT ON THE STATE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

[O PENSAMENTO DE PLATÃO SOBRE O ESTADO E SUA IMPORTÂNCIA PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO DA REPÚBLICA SOCIALISTA DO VIETNÃ]

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ABSTRACT: The state is a system of political theory that researchers are interested in to clarify the rules of movement and development of various types of states. Research on the state is the basis for making scientific predictions and determining the development trends of future state models. Therefore, studying the state is a solid basis for building and perfecting the state of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. This study uses materialism dialectics, analysis, and synthesis methods to elucidate Plato's political ideas. It explores how these ideas can inform the development of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, ensuring it is a state for the people and by the people. It underscores the enduring relevance of Plato's philosophy in shaping a state that prioritizes joint excellence and ethical governance, emphasizing the timelessness and universality of his ideas. This study reveals that Plato's political philosophy offers valuable insights for building a socialist state in Vietnam. By promoting effective leadership, ethical management, and comprehensive education, Vietnam can advance toward a state that truly serves and represents its people. The article provides a reflective analysis of how Plato's ideas can contribute to the theoretical and practical development of the Vietnamese state.

KEYWORDS: Platon; republic; state

RESUMO: O Estado é um objeto de estudo da teoria política que desperta o interesse de pesquisadores na busca por esclarecer as dinâmicas de movimento e desenvolvimento de diversos tipos de Estado. A pesquisa sobre o Estado serve de base para realizar previsões científicas e determinar as tendências de desenvolvimento de futuros modelos estatais. Portanto, o estudo do Estado constitui uma base sólida para a construção e o aperfeiçoamento do Estado da República Socialista do Vietnã. Este estudo utiliza o materialismo dialético e métodos de análise e síntese para elucidar as ideias políticas de Platão. Explora-se como tais ideias podem orientar o desenvolvimento da República Socialista do Vietnã, assegurando que seja um Estado para o povo e pelo povo. Ressalta-se a relevância duradoura da filosofia de Platão na configuração de um Estado que prioriza a excelência coletiva e a governança ética, enfatizando o caráter atemporal e universal de suas ideias. O estudo revela que a filosofia política de Platão oferece *insights* valiosos para a construção de um Estado socialista no Vietnã. Ao promover uma liderança eficaz, uma gestão ética e uma educação abrangente, o Vietnã pode avançar rumo a um Estado que verdadeiramente sirva e represente seu povo. O artigo apresenta uma análise reflexiva sobre como as ideias de Platão podem contribuir para o desenvolvimento teórico e prático do Estado vietnamita.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Platão; república; Estado

INTRODUCTION

In the theoretical systems of countries in general and of Vietnam in particular, the state is always given special importance by countries. That is one of the crucial issues, affirming the dominant position of the state and ruling class and the pillar of the political system to build a new social regime. In that

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context, understanding Plato's "Republic" state model is the basis for perfecting and innovating the theoretical system for creating the socialist state of Vietnam today. Plato's perfect state was based on principles of justice, governance by the philosopher-king, and a tripartite class structure (Barker, 1960). The article uses the materialist dialectical methodology with comprehensive principles and specific historical principles to clarify Plato's political philosophy and examine his views on the role of the philosopher-king, the structure of the perfect state, the function of education, and the interaction between justice and society. The article also uses analytical methods to clarify the philosophical foundation and practical meaning of Plato's political thought. This research method aims to explain the long-term significance of his ideas. Besides, the article also uses the synthesis method to describe essential elements of Plato's ideal state, which helps explore the relevance of his political philosophy to discourse and governance - contemporary politics. The article clarifies Plato's political thoughts on justice, governance, and the ideal state based on the above research methods (Guthrie, 1975). From there, it provides policy researchers and those working in human resource management with the criteria for team building, the nature of the state as being for the people, for the common good, and the role of work. It also offers practical insights for educating and training officials in governance and leaders in Vietnam's state agencies today, making the research directly applicable to their professional context. This understanding of Plato's ideas can empower you, the leaders and professionals, to implement these insights in your work, contributing to the development of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

THE CONCEPT OF THE STATE

The concept of the state is central to political science, representing a political entity with a defined territory, permanent population, government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states. Max Weber defined the state as an entity that claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory, highlighting the importance of sovereignty and authority (Weber, 1919). States function through institutions that manage governance, law enforcement, defense, and public policy, ensuring order and stability (Tilly, 1992). The modern state system is conventionally traced to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and associated with the principles of territorial integrity and non-interference, although Krasner argues that these "Westphalian" principles have in fact been frequently violated throughout the history of international relations (Krasner, 1995). The state's legitimacy often derives from its ability to provide public goods and maintain social contract theories posited by philosophers like Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, who emphasized the state's role in protecting natural rights and ensuring social order (Hobbes, 1651/1987; Locke, 1689/1967; Rousseau, 1762/1987).

Karl Marx's theory of the state posits that the state serves as an instrument of class domination, inherently structured to maintain the ruling class's power.

According to Marx, the state emerged historically to manage the everyday affairs of the bourgeoisie and is fundamentally an apparatus of coercion that upholds capitalist interests (Marx & Engels, 1848). The state's primary function is to protect private property and ensure the conditions necessary for capital accumulation, thereby perpetuating class exploitation and inequality (Marx, 1867). Marx argued that the state is not a neutral entity but a reflection of the economic base, with its laws, institutions, and policies designed to reinforce the dominance of the capitalist class. The concept of "relative autonomy" was later introduced by Marxist theorists like Poulantzas, suggesting that while the state appears independent, it ultimately serves capitalist interests (Poulantzas, 1973/2017). In Marxist theory, overthrowing the capitalist state is essential for establishing a classless society, where the state would eventually "wither away" as class antagonisms dissolve in the transition to communism (Marx, 1875).

METHODOLOGIES

The article employs a materialist dialectical methodology, comprehensively examining Plato's state, structure, and model through economic, political, social, class, and financial lenses to elucidate Plato's conception of the state. Utilizing a historical-specific approach, it acknowledges the merits of Plato's republican state while also noting its limitations inherent to the era and the mindset of the slavery period. The article employs analytical methods to elucidate Plato's view of the state as presented in *The Republic*, discussing the philosophical king, class, justice, education, and art to clarify Plato's vision of a republican state. Additionally, a synthetic method outlines the political theory Plato expressed, focusing on the state's operation and the head of state's role in promoting the common good. Plato's ideal state emphasizes education for the common good and justice for society, values that remain relevant for the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in its endeavor to create a state of the people, by the people, and for the people.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Philosopher-King in Plato's Vision of the Ideal State

Plato's concept of the philosopher-king is a cornerstone of his philosophical vision for an ideal state, a vision meticulously detailed in his magnum opus, "The Republic." In this work, Plato argues compellingly that philosophers, distinguished by their profound wisdom and innate rationality, are best suited to

govern (Rowe, 2007). This proposition is rooted in the belief that philosophers possess a deep understanding of the Forms, especially the Form of the Good, which equips them to make decisions that genuinely promote the state's well-being. This radical idea challenges the traditional bases of political power, typically founded on birthright, wealth, or sheer force, advocating instead for a meritocratic system where the most knowledgeable and virtuous individuals hold sway.

The philosopher-king, as envisioned by Plato, is characterized by an unwavering commitment to the pursuit of truth and an extraordinary capacity to transcend personal interests for the common good. This ruler's ascent to power is neither swift nor easy; it involves a prolonged and rigorous education spanning many years. This education encompasses the study of philosophy, mathematics, and dialectics, ensuring that only those thoroughly enlightened and supremely capable rise to the highest echelons of authority.

This gradual process of preparation is designed to filter out those who might be swayed by personal gain or inadequate understanding, thereby ensuring that only the most capable and enlightened individuals attain positions of power. Such an educational regime not only shapes the intellect but also molds the moral character of the prospective rulers, inculcating in them the virtues necessary for just and effective governance.

Plato's notion of the philosopher-king raises significant questions about the nature of political authority and the role of wisdom in governance. While the ideal of a ruler guided by philosophical insight is compelling, it also evokes concerns about elitism and the potential for power abuse. Critics caution that concentrating power in the hands of a few philosopher-kings could precipitate authoritarianism, thus undermining the democratic principles cherished by many modern societies. Despite these concerns, the notion of the philosopher-king remains a powerful paradigm, emphasizing the indispensable role of wisdom and virtue in leadership.

The concept of the philosopher-king also invites a broader reflection on the qualities that make for good governance. In contemporary political discourse, there is often a tension between the need for technical expertise and the virtues of democratic representation. Plato's ideal suggests that these qualities are not mutually exclusive but can be harmoniously integrated in the person of the philosopher-king, who embodies both intellectual rigor and moral rectitude.

Plato's concept of the philosopher-king is central to his vision of the ideal state. In "The Republic," Plato argues that only those who deeply understand the Forms, particularly the Form of the Good, are qualified to rule. The philosopher-king possesses the knowledge and the virtue necessary to govern justly and effectively. This ruler is not motivated by personal gain or ambition but by a genuine desire to achieve the common good (Reeve, 2006; Schofield, 2006).

The philosopher-kings education is extensive and rigorous, involving the study of mathematics, dialectics, and other disciplines that cultivate their rational faculties and moral integrity. This comprehensive education ensures that the philosopher-king can make wise and just decisions for the benefit of the entire state (Annas, 1981).

Plato's ideal state is characterized by a tripartite class structure comprising the rulers (philosopher-kings), the auxiliaries (warriors), and the producers (farmers, artisans, and merchants). Each class has its specific role and function, contributing to the overall harmony and stability of the state (Bloom, 1991). The rulers govern with wisdom and justice, the auxiliaries defend the state and enforce the rulers' decisions, and the producers provide for society's material needs.

The Tripartite Class Structure in Plato's Ideal State

Plato's ideal state is meticulously organized into a tripartite class structure that mirrors the three parts of the soul: the rational, the spirited, and the appetitive. This structure ensures that each class performs distinct functions, contributing to the state's harmony and justice (Blössner, 2007).

1. The Rulers (Philosopher-Kings): Representing the rational part of the soul, the rulers are the wisest and most virtuous individuals entrusted with making decisions and governing the state. Their primary focus is pursuing the common good, guided by their profound understanding of the Forms.

2. The Auxiliaries (Warriors): Corresponding to the spirited part of the soul, the auxiliaries are tasked with protecting the state and enforcing the rulers' decisions. They embody courage and loyalty, ensuring the state's security and stability.

3. The Producers (Farmers, Artisans, and Merchants): Representing the appetitive part of the soul, the producers are responsible for fulfilling the state's material needs. They engage in various economic activities, ensuring the state's prosperity and well-being. Plato argues that justice is achieved when each class performs its designated role without infringing on the functions of the other classes. This principle of specialization is crucial for the harmonious operation of the state, with each class contributing to the common good. The tripartite structure reflects Plato's belief in a hierarchical society, where individuals are assigned roles based on their natural abilities and inclinations. This hierarchical organization is intended to promote stability and order, preventing the conflicts and power struggles that can arise in more egalitarian societies (Bloom, 1991).

The tripartite class structure underscores a fundamental aspect of Plato's vision: the alignment of societal roles with the inherent characteristics of the soul. This alignment ensures that each individual is placed in a position where they can most effectively contribute to the overall harmony and justice of the state. Rational rulers, with their capacity for abstract thought and moral judgment, are ideally suited for governance. The spirited auxiliaries, driven by courage and a sense of honor, are best equipped for defense and enforcement. The appetitive producers, motivated by practical concerns and desires, are essential for sustaining the material foundation of the state.

Education in Plato's Political Thought

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Education is pivotal in Plato's ideal state, serving as how individuals attain the knowledge and virtue necessary for their respective roles. Plato's educational system is designed to identify and develop individuals' abilities early, ensuring that the most capable ascend to philosopher-king.

The Allegory of the Cave, presented in Book VII of "The Republic," vividly illustrates Plato's views on education and enlightenment. In the allegory, prisoners are chained in a cave, perceiving only shadows on the wall. One prisoner escapes, ascending to the outside world and experiencing the proper forms of reality. This journey from darkness to light symbolizes the philosopher's path to knowledge, moving from the realm of appearances to the realm of the forms (Adeboye, 2024).

The allegory underscores the transformative power of education, emphasizing the importance of intellectual and moral development in achieving the ideal state; having attained enlightenment, the philosopher-king is responsible for guiding others toward knowledge and ensuring just governance.

Plato's educational system is rigorous and comprehensive, encompassing various intellectual and moral development stages. It begins with essential music and gymnastics education to shape the young's character and physical abilities. As individuals progress, they undergo further education in mathematics, dialectics, and philosophy, culminating in studying the Forms. This structured approach ensures that only the most capable and virtuous individuals attain leadership positions (Burnyeat, 2000).

In Plato's view, education is not merely a means to an end but a lifelong process of soul formation. The early stages of education aim at teaching virtues and shaping character, while the later stages focus on developing intellectual capacities and moral insight. This comprehensive educational journey ensures that individuals are knowledgeable and virtuous, capable of making decisions that reflect the highest ideals of justice and the common good (Kraut, 1992).

Education is crucial in Plato's political philosophy as it is the foundation for developing virtuous and capable citizens. Plato's educational system is designed to identify and nurture each individual's innate abilities, ensuring they are well-prepared to fulfill their designated roles within the state (Kraut, 1992).

Plato's curriculum includes physical training to promote health and discipline, music and poetry to cultivate emotional sensitivity and moral character, and advanced studies in mathematics and dialectics to sharpen the intellect (Hooley, 2024). This holistic approach to education aims to create well-rounded individuals who can contribute to the state's stability and harmony.

Education is particularly rigorous for the guardian class, which includes both the rulers and the auxiliaries. These individuals are trained to possess both the physical prowess necessary for defending the state and the intellectual and moral qualities required for wise governance. The philosopher-king emerges from this guardian class, selected based on their exceptional abilities and virtues (Ferrari, 2005).

The Role of Justice in Plato's Ideal State

Justice is the cornerstone of Plato's ideal state, as articulated in "The Republic." For Plato, justice is defined as the harmonious arrangement of the three classes, each performing its designated role. This principle of specialization ensures that the state operates efficiently, with each individual contributing to the common good (Orji, 2024).

Plato's concept of justice extends beyond the individual to the state. A just state is one in which the rulers govern wisely, the auxiliaries protect and enforce the law, and the producers provide for the material needs of the society. This harmonious arrangement promotes the well-being of all citizens, ensuring that the state functions as a unified whole (Anagnostou-Laoutides, 2024).

For Plato, justice is not merely a matter of external actions but also involves the internal harmony of the soul (Bobonich, 2002). A just individual is one whose rational, spirited, and appetitive parts are in balance, mirroring the harmony of the ideal state. This alignment of individual and state justice underscores the interdependence of personal virtue and societal well-being (Anagnostou-Laoutides, 2024).

Plato's notion of justice has profound implications for contemporary political theory. It challenges the prevailing emphasis on individual rights and freedoms, arguing that the common good and the harmonious functioning of society should take precedence. This communitarian perspective highlights the importance of social cohesion and mutual responsibility in achieving a just society. Plato's concept of justice in the state is to demonstrate balance and harmony. Each class, appropriately expressing its specific role, contributes to the overall balance of the state. This balance is not static but dynamic, requiring constant adjustment and vigilance to ensure that the various elements of the state remain in proper symmetry and function. This dynamic understanding of justice reflects a complex and nuanced approach to governance that acknowledges the complexity and interdependence of social actors (Anagnostou-Laoutides, 2024).

Justice is the central theme of Plato's political philosophy, intricately linked to his ideal state vision. In "The Republic," Plato defines justice as a condition where each individual performs the role they are naturally best suited to, ensuring that all parts of the state work together harmoniously (Ferrari, 2005).

In a just society, each class, the rulers, the auxiliaries, and the producers, fulfills its distinct functions without infringing on the roles of others. The rulers, guided by wisdom, make decisions for the common good; the auxiliaries, driven by courage, defend the state; and the producers, motivated by necessity and desire, provide for society's material needs. This division of labor ensures that the state operates efficiently and harmoniously (Santas, 2010).

Plato also draws an analogy between justice in the state and justice in the individual. Just as a well-ordered state requires each class to perform its proper function, a well-ordered soul requires each part, reason, spirit, and appetite, to maintain its proper place. When reason rules, supported by spirit, and appetite is kept in check, the individual achieves personal justice and harmony, mirroring the state's justice (Cornford, 1941).

The Role of Property and Wealth in Plato's Ideal State

In Plato's ideal state, the guardians, including rulers and the auxiliaries, are forbidden from owning private property or accumulating personal wealth. Plato argues that the pursuit of wealth can lead to corruption and conflict, undermining the unity and harmony of the state. Instead, the guardians are to live communally, sharing all possessions and resources (Walter, 2024).

Plato's rejection of private property for the guardian class is rooted in his belief that pursuing wealth is incompatible with pursuing virtue. He contends that those who seek personal wealth are more likely to be driven by selfish desires rather than the common good. By removing the temptation of wealth, Plato aims to ensure that the guardians remain focused on their duties and responsibilities to the state (Cecchet, 2024).

This communal lifestyle promotes unity and solidarity among the guardians, reinforcing their commitment to the common good. It also prevents the development of social and economic inequalities that could lead to division and conflict within the state.

The communal living arrangements of the guardians are designed to eliminate the social and economic disparities that often lead to conflict and corruption. By ensuring that the guardians are free from personal material concerns, Plato believes that they will be better able to devote themselves entirely to the service of the state and the pursuit of the common good.

The Role of the State in Plato's Ideal Society

Plato's ideal state was characterized by a solid and centralized government, with philosopher kings holding supreme power. The state's primary responsibility is to promote the common good and ensure the welfare of all citizens. This includes maintaining order, providing education, and ensuring each person fulfills his or her designated social role (Anagnostou-Laoutides, 2024).

The state's role in Plato's ideal society is extensive and intrusive. It involves regulating education, the arts, and citizens' private lives. Plato argues that such control is necessary to ensure the state remains harmonious. He contends that without strict oversight, individuals may be led astray by their desires and passions, leading to disorder and conflict (Anagnostou-Laoutides, 2024).

Plato's vision of a solid and centralized state has been criticized for its authoritarian tendencies. Critics argue that such a state could quickly become oppressive, stifling individual freedom and autonomy (Popper, 1966). They contend that a more decentralized and democratic approach to governance is necessary to protect individual rights and promote a just society. Despite these critiques, Plato's emphasis on the state's role in promoting the common good and maintaining social harmony remains a central aspect of his political philosophy (Bloom, 1991).

The extensive role of the state in Plato's ideal society reflects his

belief in the necessity of order and harmony for the realization of justice. By regulating various aspects of life, the state aims to create an environment where individuals can develop their capacities and contribute to the common good. This comprehensive approach to governance seeks to balance individual freedoms with the community's needs, ensuring that the state operates justly and equitably.

Plato did not explicitly define the nature of the state. Instead, he envisioned a just state prioritizing common interests devoid of private ownership, a romantic notion that was difficult to realize in practice. The state inherently possesses two attributes: social and class, which coexist in an inseparable unity with a dialectical relationship. The ruling class and the state shape the nature of the state, mainly through disseminating ideology via an education system for soldiers, establishing an organizational structure, and directing operations aligned with the class's interests. Engels posited that any army is the primary instrument of state violence, facilitating the state's domestic and foreign functions. Historically, no army has ever fought for the common interests of all classes, as it is a tool of armed violence for a particular class and state. Engels asserted that the army is a violent instrument for the state to dominate society, enforce repression and deterrence, compel obedience from other forces and classes to the ruling class and the state, protect the domestic ruling class's interests, wage wars to defend the state's territory from external invasion or conduct aggressive wars to expand territory, serve the ruling class's interests, and impose subjugation on other nations (Engels, 1884; Marx & Engels, 1848).

The Influence of Plato's Ideal State on Later Political Thought

Plato's vision of the ideal state has had a profound and lasting impact on the development of Western political thought. His ideas have influenced many philosophers and political theorists, from Aristotle to Thomas More to Karl Marx (Yack, 2024; Klosko, 1986).

Aristotle, Plato's most famous student, developed his vision of the ideal state in response to Plato's ideas. While he shared many of Plato's concerns about the dangers of wealth and the importance of virtue, he rejected Plato's communalism. He argued for a more balanced and moderate approach to governance (De Vogel, 1953).

Thomas More's "Utopia," written in the 16th century, is often seen as a direct response to Plato's "Republic." More's vision of an ideal society shares many similarities with Plato's, including the emphasis on communal living and the rejection of private property. However, More's "Utopia" is also a critique of his time's social and economic inequalities, highlighting the enduring relevance of Plato's ideas (Konstan, 2024).

In the 19th century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels developed communist theory based on Plato's vision of a classless and communal society. While Marx and Engels rejected Plato's hierarchical class structure, they shared his belief in the importance of communal ownership and the dangers of wealth and inequality

(Tarrit, 2024).

Despite the many differences between these later thinkers and Plato, his vision of the ideal state has inspired and challenged political theorists for centuries. His emphasis on justice, virtue, and the common good remains a powerful and enduring contribution to political philosophy. Plato's ideal state is still meaningful to today's political ideology of a republican state with justice for the community's common good. Although Plato's state model is limited by historical factors, a state for peace and justice is the goal humanity always strives for (Lane, 2024).

Contemporary Relevance of Plato's Ideal State

Plato's vision of the ideal state remains relevant to contemporary political discourse. His emphasis on the importance of wisdom and virtue in leadership, the dangers of wealth and inequality, and the role of education in promoting a just society all resonate with modern concerns (Orji, 2024).

Nowadays, in an era of increasing political polarization and economic inequality, Plato's ideas about the importance of the common good and the dangers of selfish ambition are particularly relevant. His vision of a society where each fulfills their designated role and contributes to the common good offers a counterpoint to the individualism and materialism that often dominate modern political discourse.

Plato's emphasis on the importance of education in shaping individuals and promoting a just society also remains relevant. In a world where social and economic factors often limit access to quality education, his vision of an educational system that identifies and cultivates each individual's abilities offers a valuable model for promoting equality and social mobility (Alvarez-Abarejo, 2024).

While Plato's vision of the ideal state may seem romantic and impractical, its underlying principles offer valuable insights into contemporary political thought. By revisiting Plato's ideas, we can better understand the values and principles guiding our efforts to create a just and equitable society. The contemporary relevance of Plato's ideal state lies in its capacity to address enduring issues of justice, leadership, and social organization. By engaging with Plato's ideas, modern societies can draw on the wisdom of ancient philosophy to navigate the complex challenges of the present and future, striving to create a more just, equitable, and harmonious world (Pangle, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Plato's ideal republic presents a compelling vision of a just society governed by intelligence and rationality. His writings underscore that influential rulers must embody justice, education, and reason, offering valuable lessons

for modern politics in establishing criteria for assessing rulers' capabilities and authority. This article has examined key elements of Plato's political philosophy to understand his ideal state and the role of wisdom and virtue in leadership, highlighting the importance of selecting rulers committed to the common good. Plato's tripartite class structure illustrates the link between individual and societal well-being, suggesting that a just society relies on the harmonious functioning of all its components. His emphasis on education showcases the transformative power of intellectual and moral development. At the same time, his concept of justice, as the cornerstone of a well-ordered state, calls for a balance between individual and collective interests. Although Plato's ideal state may appear romantic and unrealistic, particularly in its vision of a state without class conflict, it reflects the ruling class's will. Nevertheless, its fundamental principles offer valuable insights into contemporary political thought, especially regarding leadership founded on righteousness, wisdom, and justice. This framework supports Vietnam's endeavor to enhance its theoretical system by building a state where the people are sovereign and leaders and officials serve the populace to achieve their goals. The objective is to create a happy, prosperous, inclusive, and independent Vietnamese state.

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